

FINE PRINT

ISSUE SEVEN
FREE

A LITERARY AND VISUAL ARTS PUBLICATION

WHEN THERE IS NOWHERE
ELSE TO GO

LAUREN IRELAND

My heart is a hotel room
and I am alone here tonight
cold windows, cold sheets, warm breath
cold city sparkling coldly below
time drying on my thighs.
If you ask me, I will tell you:
even as a child, I knew
childhood was a mistake.

It's been a long day.

Now I am 37. The mornings go on
until four o'clock.
That is when I am closest to death.
Today I am eating tulip leaves, dying of water.
Because there is the unreal
and then there is the really really unreal.
When you are my age you will understand.

My hair grows long and I cut it
my hair grows long again and I cut it again.
Change is seduction.
Change is seduction,
seduction is a message:
you could never be this again
even if you wanted it.
Now I am 37.

Who even am I
hungover, not even real
I froze my eyes with the lip of a Coke can.
Well water and jasmine
milk milk lemonade
the perfume of the suburbs haunts my hangover
and every ex-boyfriend finds me on the internet.
I was drunk enough to look in the mirror
and think, this is ok.
Now I am stoned, eating cake in bed.
Sorrow is a long game.

When there is nowhere else to go
past all desire, past the place of feelings
my hands are sexy lions
hunting in the yellow forests of memory.
I don't want to remember things.
Paper like moth wings
those folded notes
soft foxed edges.
Handful of pony beads.
High school high school high school.
Why won't you help me not feel like this?
All the dying commas fall
blazing from the sky.



KELSEY LIVINGSTON

The moon has a drunken face
laughing and laughing over the gravel drive
in the blood-bright October air.
The truth is not that bad
coming from you.
But when the truth is
coming for you
that is another story.
Who can loosen a Champagne muselet with her teeth?
Uh-oh.
I can.

Are we ever not within a breath of hell?
Jim Beams, like 3 or 4 of them, and
I am past reason.
I am licking the tender inside
of my own tender elbow.
I am the rickety queen of my own bed.

The last time I was beautiful I
carried the cold in on my coat
carried a book wrapped in brown paper,
a surprise. My hair a crown of braids.
Candlelight, fat glasses of golden wine.
Be careful what you wish for
in the airport bar.
Now I am burning
and burning in circles.
My crown is fire. No, rain. No, fire.
My crown is the heat of things passing.

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FINAL NOTE
RYAN BURGESS

I want to have
and to not have

meaning I'm sticking my fingers
in robin's eggs
blue as my lung

everyone is worse than me
meaning they reach for me
like a mirror

I am dusted
like a hog
I fatten myself for the world

you said let's get over these types of things
you know
feelings

I feel like
I want the sweet smell of grass
as I destroy it



Glam Beckett



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OVERHEARD WHILE WALKING
THROUGH THE FINANCIAL
DISTRICT ON MY WAY TO
NORTH BEACH HAIKU

BENJAMIN ALESHIRE

All the smart money
is in towing glaciers to shore—
think about it, babe

ELIZABETH HALL

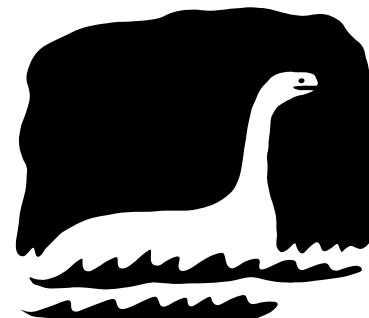
TRUMPETS

the day burns up sitting next to C on the stoop on the street lined with trumpet trees. yellow, yellow, yellow. sun enough. i tell her—this is no longer the day i fought with my ex-lover on the side of the freeway, no longer the afternoon wherein i was yelled at by a disappointed mom at an art workshop. i tell C—today is the day i watch your neighbors wash their car in the street. today i drink warm negra modelo and swallow chocolate wafers and listen to you tell me about the worms that eat styrofoam. a crack of hope. the night spools out. the worms work so slow, she says. they take years to consume a single strip of plastic. hope enough. *worm-time is our time*, i tell her. we are slow, nevertheless here, eating, talking about the ways she did and did not show care towards her father those last months. here is where we re-imagine how we care. where we inscribe the kind of care we wish to take with each other. we split the kit kat. the neighbors roll up the water hose. the breeze rattles the jacarandas. the blooms cling to the tree. a big green leaf falls in the drive, and there, the cat sprawls, belly to the sky. i want to be fat and open like the cat on the cool concrete, but the car comes and it honks, and i trot out to say hey! into the open window. my ex lover and i do not talk about dirty dishes or the rings of pink in the sinks on the long car ride back to our apartment. the port lights singe the black sky. tonight i'm gold inside like a glow worm.

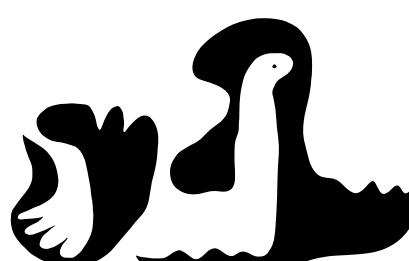
THE LAST SUN

i want to spend the last twenty dollars in my bank account on cigarettes and melons in a green sack. C does not want to look for a job in the morning or in the afternoon. we eat fruit in the sun. we watch two men push an upturned recliner onto the sidewalk. no one wants it, not even us. next to the recliner, there's a big brown book about wheels and a box of hot rod periodicals tied with blue string. there aren't enough tiny black letters on the pages of the magazines for me to lose myself in the smell of gasoline, glory of tarmac at dusk. i'm stuck here. i kick my legs out in the crabgrass. a bird motionless on a fence then somehow in the air. its sudden assurance, a shock. not like the lizard sunning on a brick by the backdoor. if it tries to catch any flies, i don't notice. i'm not against staying here. with her. our lizard. i'm not against remaking the week, the world in my head. the sun passes over us. we cut limes in the dark yard. we gossip about her roommate's brother and wait for the cicadas. we can't hear them. not above her roommate who is laughing then yelling into the phone. our conspiratorial tones.

i EXIST!



AM I DOING THIS WRONG?



WHAT AM I EVEN DOING HERE?



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FEATURED ARTIST

Thor Harris is an artist, writer, carpenter, and musician living in Austin, Texas. He has released numerous handmade zines throughout the years, including *A Post Apocalyptic Tale of Friendship*, *Dear God*, and *An Ocean of Despair*, an illustrated depiction of dealing with depression that comes with a musical companion piece, all of which can be found through *Monofonus Press*. He has also written several helpful lists, such as *How to Live Like a King for Very Little* and *How to Tour in a Band or Whatever*, which can be found online. He builds a lot of his own musical instruments and has performed with Shearwater, Bill Callahan, Swans, and many others, as well as released music with his own group, Thor&Friends, whose first two albums can be found through the independent label *Living Music Duplication*. He has provided us with the center spread for this issue of *Fine Print* and spoke with us about his ethos and creative processes.

Out of curiosity, where does the name Thor come from?

I was working at Thundercloud in 1986 and there were four guys there with the name Michael. The seniormost of the Michaels got to keep that name. A guy named Ron Williams started calling me Thor, and it stuck. It has been very helpful to have the name Thor to try to live up to.

As an artist who works in so many mediums, do you choose a specific medium based on what you are trying to convey?

Yes. To me, visual art is way more effective at storytelling or narrative ideas — representative work. Music is better at conveying emotion.

Your visual art often contains phallic imagery, as well as scenes that seem to have a biblical influence. Could you talk a little about what inspires this in your work?

I think I have long had a desire to jab conservatives, especially the religious right. The puritanical, moralistic bullshit in our society makes me want to draw obscene things. I think Robert Crumb said that's what made him draw naughty things, too. Americans are uptight about body stuff.

You are politically outspoken, to the extent that Twitter suspended your account for posting a video tutorial on how to punch a Nazi. Do you feel like it's important for artists to use that platform to fight for their political beliefs?

No. I don't think all art should be political. Politicians are the worst people in all societies. If I could go back to being apolitical, fuck knows I would. But for me, this is the worst political crisis I have ever seen, and I intend to fight this Republican farce 'til it is dead or I am. Who fucking knew before November 2016 that Americans were that racist and dumb? Answer: Steve Bannon. On that day, we put our hatred for each other before our survival as a species.

Who or what were some of your early influences?

My early musical influences were funk and soul bands from the '70s. I was born in '65. When I got into rock music, it was prog rock. In visual art, my favorites were always the surrealists. I love the absurd humor that art movement brought us.

Do you feel like having a sense of humor is important when it comes to art?

Here is the thing about humor: Humor is a coping mechanism. The funniest people are often hyper-sensitive and depressed. Those are also traits that really creative people have. So, although I do like art that is not particularly funny, I think that most brilliant artists are in fact funny people. I have met many of my musical heroes. They are all funny. Also, I think much great art is devastating and funny. If you have some heavy shit to say, think of what is funny about it.

You have been a longtime advocate for mental health, something that sadly still carries a lot of stigma in our country. What is some advice you would give those who suffer from mental illness or those who want to support people around them who do?

I wrote a little graphic novel about my descent into major depression in 1992. I then made a short video about depression for *The Mental Health Channel*. At the time the video came out, I was touring the world with Swans. All the music blogs shared the video, and people all over the world told me that it meant a lot to them. I had accidentally helped people. This was a great honor. Since then a lot of people have assumed that I am a safe person to talk with about depression and so have confided in me. I used to work at a suicide hotline. I got good at talking to people about their sadness. It is an honor to serve others by listening. I almost never give advice. People are smart. They can figure things out on their own. They just need to feel less alone.

How did you first get into carpentry?

I started building things from wood when I was very small. The tools and knowledge were always around. My father and brother both built and repaired things. I was a roofer when I was 15 in South Texas. It was hot as hell. I did not want to be a carpenter when I was young. I just did it because I was young, strong, and dumb. It came naturally. But now I love doing that work. It is incredibly satisfying work of undeniable value.

What is your process like when creating visual art? Do you usually have a finished product in mind, or does that start to take shape while you're working?

When I make drawings and paintings, I have no idea what I am doing. The piece comes together as I work. Each work is a leap of faith. There is always a middle period where I think that the whole thing is a mistake and a failure. By forcing myself to finish everything, I have learned this is just part of the process.

What is something another artist has created that you wish you had?

Bohren and der Club of Gore have brilliantly slowed jazz down to a pace that is so glacial that it detunes my brain's internal clock. It is amazing. I wish I had thought of that. Listen to them.

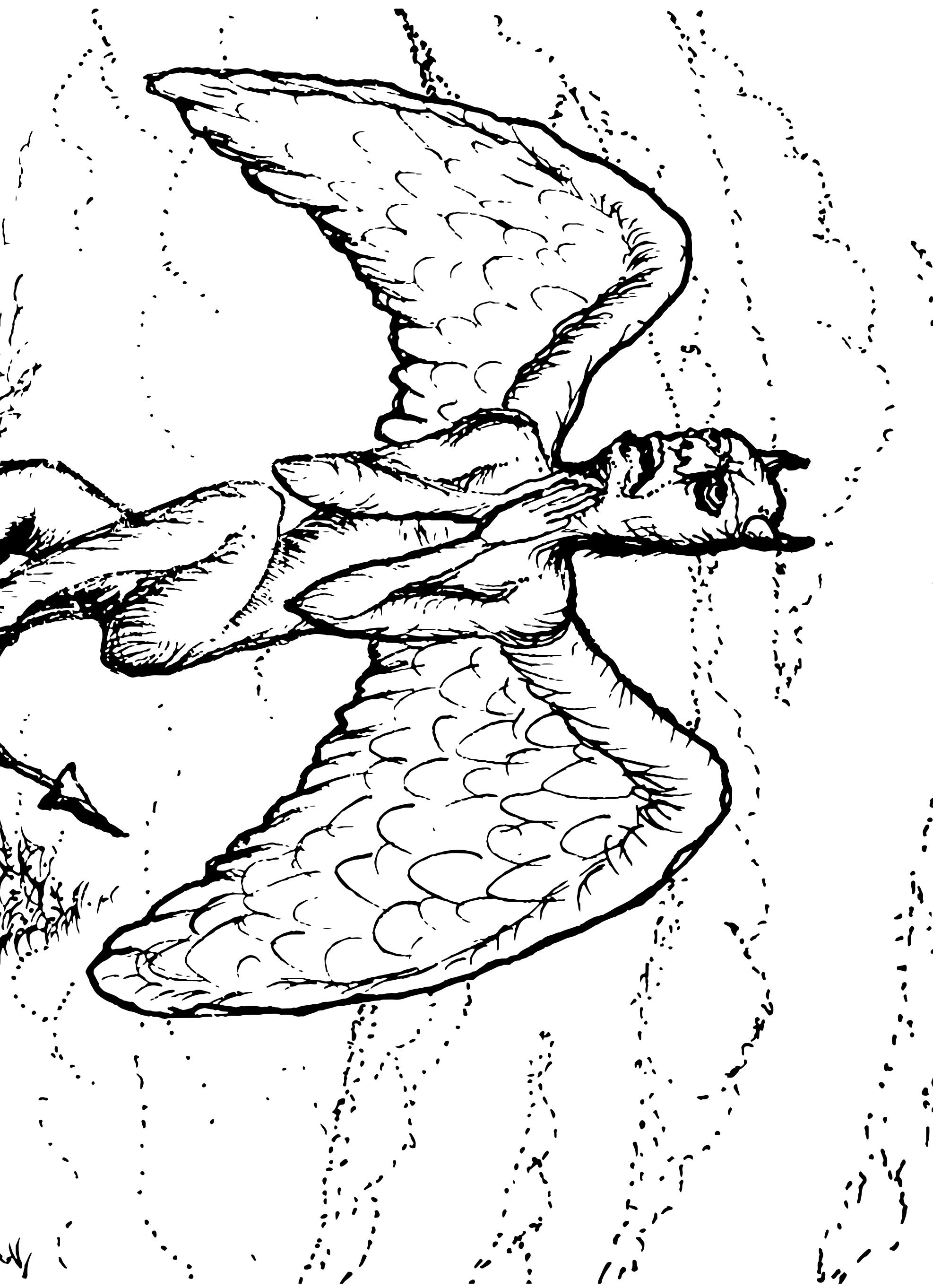
Is there something you hope people take away from seeing your work?

Although I do enjoy some ugly art, I really like to make art and music that I would call pretty, or executed with technical proficiency. I want to convey a generosity and compassion for all living things while also conveying disgust at the cruelty and vulgarity all around me. I have had depression my whole life, so what I feel alternates between deep sorrow and boisterous laughter. I want to say to people, You are not alone. I think it is fucked too!

Are there any projects you have in the works that you would like to share with us?

I am making six records for *Joyful Noise Recordings* this year. Two of them will be Thor&Friends. The other four are collaborations with lots of people I have wanted to work with. Some of the people on them are Bill Callahan, Swans, Wye Oak, Xiu Xiu, John Congleton, A Hawk and a Hacksaw, Jolie Holland, Carla Bozulich, and many more. It has been fun and a logistical nightmare. I am hand drawing all six covers too. They are these post-apocalyptic rebirth landscape scenes. They will all come out as a box set toward the end of the year. Or, for half the price, they can all be bought as digital downloads.





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HIGHWAY 49 LAURA THEOBALD

Dear Birds,

On highway 49 we're supremely alone. The universe has gone low res. The highway pixels up to forty feet. You smear the heavens across the dash. The street so black it's black. Any kind of smell seems ominous. This town mainly moth balls Freon gasoline and cedar. I say "Watch out for animals." I say "Don't text and drive." And then I can't say what I say next 'cause it's just for us.

PHRASE MACHINE GION DAVIS

Wasting a whole afternoon sulking at Bed Bath & Beyond & not buying anything, it's funny how self deprecating stuff is so in lately. The thing about being lonely is being in love doesn't fix it & neither does crying on the bus even though both feel more real when a bunch of strangers are watching & not trying to stop you from doing it. I want to cry for real. I think it would feel good like snapping a bone or a stick over my knee but I'm only sniffing.

Last year I cried in my friend's car & now we're not friends & I'm okay with that. I have other people to spoon feed me through the first shitty day of fall that makes everything so sad, desperate like waking up with matching tattoos, remember my last ex who wanted matching tats that said Whatever Forever & I said no because we were in love but I could feel the end crashing into us in North Carolina & when it was over it felt good & broken. Our whole thing was getting drunk together but I can say that about a lot of people I know, those little touches through I hope yr ok



texts, fishing crumpled tissues out of jacket pockets that smell like armpit & Versace. I get used to getting away with my rule breaking like showing up high to a traffic stop & the cop with his gun didn't give my friend a ticket so what did we do right? It feels like nobody wants to be here on earth tonight. Our booted feet bouncing with our heartbeats, waiting legs crossed. Our hearts sync up for five beats & then fall out. Hungover & hopeful for the first time in a while, dead chipmunks, alive chipmunks, a wedding in a bar parking lot next to the train station, white stretch limo not waiting for me. I kissed the cue ball last night just to leave a red lipstick stamp & I'd like to say I let you win but that was an accident. Somehow I've developed this mean fake laugh that pops out when I'm feeling empty or not listening. Somehow I've become mean today. Another accident. I guess all the pizza

niceness from last night wore off. Everything felt so poetic but I can't think of what to say about it except that I can't eat & I'm tired & I'm waiting on your texts. Or maybe I'm very cold in just my jean jacket plucking ball jars out of a box on the street on the walk home & I have to stop myself from smashing them into the asphalt because I need them but I got so angry earlier my throat still tangs like copper & my stomach still hurts & I turn around & it's 4pm, it's October, it's what happens when you sleep til noon, breath catching when you sleep til noon, breath catching on the smell of dryer sheets spilling out onto the sidewalk so intimate like the crook of a neck in a clean t-shirt, a monarch slipping through the powerlines, hydrangeas drooping over a porch railing, you holding the cue ball up for me to kiss & I wished myself luck & you said oh it's perfect with my mouth in your hand for a moment & it really felt true.

FEATURED AUTHOR

Clare Welsh is a writer, photographer, and illustrator from western Pennsylvania, though she can often be found elsewhere, recording the world from a corset and cowboy boots on a gravelly street corner in New Orleans, shooting a starved yearling on film behind your grandfather's old shed, showing up to the bar to be fed smooth gin and clunky pick-up lines until retreating to a table outside to process the apocalypse we call America. This may sound like a half-dream, a lark, a one-off, but this is the universe Clare's work always inhabits: that carnival space between high and low culture, pretty yet gritty, aesthetically fanciful yet viscerally grounded in the real human concerns of poverty, addiction, grief, and mental health. Clare was generous enough to answer a few questions for us about the inspirations and thought process behind her photography and poetry, both of which are showcased here. Her chapbook of poems and drawings, *Chimeras*, is available through *Finishing Line Press*.

Landscape feels important to your poetry—but that landscape is as much cultural as it is geographical. How does your work in general, and “The Mercy Meat” in particular, bridge a divide in U.S. culture between city and country?

I don't know if my work, or anything here on earth, can bridge that divide, but I hope that's one positive side effect of poetry. We see that divide in the sermons of many rural pastors: There are the good shepherds, and then there are the worldly sinners, and don't you dare get caught in Babylon on Judgment Day. But we also see that divide in *The New York Times*: There's the enlightened city, and then there's the *forgotten, stuck* country people. Divisive language, the language of oily pastors and media barons, deepens the cultural divide. Human language, the language of poetry, fiction, and songs, bridges the divide. It's that human language I'm always after.

The idea of a “sacrificial” animal or scapegoat, whether a deer hunted for meat or a woman objectified by toxic masculinity, figures prominently in your poetry. Can you say more about this concept?

I read a book called *Violence and the Sacred* by René Girard. I don't recommend the book because it lacks humor. But Girard gave me a framework for the sacrificial questions my poetry keeps asking. Patriarchal gods demand blood. Why? What does a patriarchy release through violence? In the Bible, Abraham is fully prepared to kill his own son to appease what he, Abraham, worships. If you can understand that one story, you can understand what many American children in the era of school shootings have to deal with. We keep sacrificing their lives to an idea of freedom. Ironically, freedom doesn't mean anything if no one's left alive to enjoy it. *Violence and the Sacred* helped me understand—not forgive, but understand—why women and children get sacrificed by this patriarchal fear that manifests as anger. They get sacrificed by their families, by intimate partners, by strangers, by trusted priests, by maddening crowds. This is because all suppressed fear gets released as violence. American fear is American violence. Eventually, we'll have to reconcile that.

Your work as it pertains to the body is both gory and glittery, raw and whimsical, violent and tender. Why is this liminal space between magical and mundane (as violence has certainly become mundane in the U.S.) so important to your art?

Liminal space is the space we all live in, and the only space you can write about if you want to tell a lick of truth about the human condition. People are complex. We aren't one thing. We don't *want* one thing. We're full of contradictions. We want a lover who will treat us tender, but fuck us hard. We want a home, but only so we can leave it. We want to be tied down. We want to break ties. We want a good, long life. We want to die tonight. Like Winona Ryder, we could have all the money in the world and still shoplift at Saks 5th Avenue. Or, like me, we can be dirt poor and lust-buy a Camaro in lieu of something utilitarian: those mundane milestones you're supposed to want when you're dirt poor. Liminal space is human space. That's why it's important.

Can you talk a little about your work's investment in furthering conversations about mental health and body dysmorphia?

I think poetry, because it has the potential to be liminal and real, is an ideal place to have these conversations. Currently, I'm in school to be a therapist, but I started as a bartender. People would always tell me their troubles, their secrets. I was known for being the one who listened. The other bartenders weren't as interested in that part of the job. It was my favorite part. So I figured I may as well go full-time and try to do that work in a way that was more sustainable. My poetry is self-serving. It sustains me, but I hope it sustains my readers as well. Like anyone trying to make a buck, psychologists aren't immune to the language of advertising, and I cringe when I see the topic of mental health reduced to catchy Instagram posts. Sometimes, my poetry is an effort to keep that conversation real and inclusive, to keep it human.

How does your approach toward visual mediums like photography differ from writing? Are there themes or topics that are easier to access without naming them in words? What are your primary influences in each of these mediums?

My poetry and photography share the same source. I think other artists will understand when I say I have another world I walk into where my ideas come from, where my photographs and poems start. That world is like our world, except more possible. Anything can happen there: Love. Hate. Eternal Life. A fast death. A highway robbery. Talking animals. The whole thing. It's where I go, where I come from, and the only place I'm a real patriot of. Sometimes, I meet other people in that space. My influences for American poetry and photography—Bruce Springsteen, Tom Waits, Francesca Woodman, Sally Mann—all live in that space, and I wave to them casually as if we're neighbors. I don't think any topic is easy, only that sometimes photographs tell the story better than poetry, or vice versa. As a poet, it's important that I shut up now and then. Photography helps me do that. It lets me step back, listen to what the light is saying. Light is a teacher. It shows us our scars, what hurts, what's been overlooked. I hope I keep getting lucky, and can listen to the light for a long time to come.

THE MERCY MEAT CLARE WELSH

It is the final hour in the year of guns. The smell of boiling turkey neck riles bile.

I spook easy, flinch the hours.

The most famous rapist

in the kingdom of rapists

in the great era

of rapists has shot himself.

An abrupt mercy, two bullets to the head.

It is the month of mercy.

A deer with eyes blackened

by flies slouches to my door.

A mercy, her neck

of breath. Her skin not yet

nailed to exposed rafters.

Flies crawl through her

pink tear ducts, buzz

like a spinning saw, like the past

tense of seeing like

it's already too late.

I can not call her life

free, though her doe legs flinch

fast and enviable. Though her

red coat erects rifles.

My boyfriend says *you can't let this*

shit ruin your life, but in the year

of guns, I don't own my life

but an ultimatum of meat:

food for flies or food

for the congregation speaking

fire to a wooden stake.

A choice between sound

and fury. I clutch my illusion of will

like a doll. This could be, after the last

woman with mud clumped hair

dragged through the town square, this is

almost, after the last man

watching the way he watched

in Hemingway a bull

sick with spears fight

for freedom, a flag shredded

to sky, a mercy.



“Monument” – Photographer: Clare Welsh, MUA: Ty Vick, Model: Bri Scala.

LETTERS TO THE ELEMENTS

BY DYLAN KRIEGER



dear fire: i write to you freshly ravished because you are always coming from just having ravished someone. make the thighs of the whole night buckle beneath your frame. there is nothing to regret where you are currently taxonomizing the heat of the stars from several stories up.



dear soil: don't forget, lest you become embittered, some things last as long as your tendrils lovingly wrapped around tree roots. the universe, in its strict laws of physics, is just as stubborn and unmoving as your own devotion. take comfort in its company, and echo its steadfastness like a musical drone.



dear fearless: you double reality in most senses, but not exactly. resist the urge to think of your mirror's cloudiness as a flaw. your inability to fit into any cartoon speech bubble is exactly what makes you the enigmatic elephant drawing eyes at every circus. don't stray far.



dear tears: the craving is a faucet you keep winding counter-clockwise but can't turn off. what you need is a living blanket to hold you tight enough the uncongealed bits won't flake away. but does such a thing exist? and if it did, could it possibly find contentment in the confines of your bedroom? the answer is too painful to open even half an eye, but you must try.



dear thespian: you worry behind the curtain no one can hear the buzz of your electrical current, but thankfully, you are mistaken. your charisma is an all-powerful lasso made of cake icing, and everybody wants a taste. reserve your biggest roar for those who savor it, instead of treating you like a careless palate cleanser. you are so much more—a flavor impossible to ignore.



dear thinker: the reins of all the systematic horse carts in the world look back and feel safe in your firm grasp, unaware you could let go at any moment. you may be reliable, but so is the deterioration of everything, and you are nothing if not open to new ideas among the ruins. sift carefully; there is no rush.



dear death: what people are drawn to about you is so intricately radiant they can only call it light, but that's their loss. they believe the light is the point, but in fact this description robs you of your most precious and gruesome details. the next time you are highly aware of loving someone, invite them close enough to finger the grooves and contours of your less-than-perfect chandelier. you may be the one washing out all the photos of yourself to begin with.

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